

This is a wake-up call to all the individuals who were involved in the rescue and recovery mission of September 11, 2001

My name is Detective Ron Richards, I'm a 17 year veteran of the New York City Police Department currently assigned to the Bomb Squad. I've recently been diagnosed with Stage 3 Multiple Myeloma. Multiple Myeloma is a cancer of the Plasma cells found in the bone marrow. It represents 1% of all cancers and accounts for 2% of cancer deaths. The Myeloma cells accumulate in the bone marrow which causes anemia, reduction in the production of white blood cells, and also reduces blood platelet counts. Although certain professions have a higher risk factor, many physicians feel that exposure and inhalation of the contaminants during the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11th 2001 and the contamination of the environment in the months that followed contributed to my current condition. During that time I was assigned to Emergency Services Unit and spent 5 months at ground zero and the Staten Island Landfill.

In November of 2006, I underwent a full body image that was offered through the Detective Endowment Association. Although the body imaging has been a blessing to those of us who suffer from ailments of the heart and other detectable illnesses, the test is not however able to detect certain other debilitating ailments. In December of 2006 as in previous years, I underwent my yearly OSHA physical offered through the Police Department. The test consisted of an EKG, blood work, pulmonary testing, hearing and a vision test. Although these tests identify many abnormalities, my condition however was not identified.

In late February, early March I began to feel fatigued, I suffered from shortness of breath, and I would wake up several times a night to urinate. I noticed my urine seemed to be very foamy. My only symptoms at the time. In March I saw my family physician and underwent some additional tests which included a urine analysis. The results showed evidence of microscopic blood particles in the urine. On March 23, 2007, my physician prescribed outside blood work assuming I had a possible prostate infection. The test results were shocking, My urea nitrogen level was 43 and my creatinine level was 5.8. My December 2006 OSHA blood work results indicated a urea nitrogen level of 14 and a creatinine level of 0.8, which were all within normal reference ranges. I was informed at that time that I had only 15% total kidney function and that I was at "End Stage" renal failure. After a consultation with a kidney specialist, I was admitted to Staten Island University Hospital for a one day kidney biopsy. That one day biopsy turned into an 11 day emotional nightmare, with an 8 day Intensive Care stay.

During that stay, I was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma which was later confirmed through a bone marrow biopsy. I was informed that a byproduct of the Myeloma is a protein that restricts the functions of the kidneys, therefore, causing permanent kidney damage. During those eight days in intensive care I underwent a radical procedure called "Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy" to try and regain some renal function. The Therapy consisted of eight straight days of continuous dialysis with only breaks to receive my Chemotherapy. I was discharged from the hospital on Friday April 6th to spend Easter with my family. The results were not as I had hoped. My creatinine levels have risen again indicating that I am still in Renal failure, with the possibility of receiving Dialysis three days a week, three hours a day from now on in addition to fighting my cancer. I was told that because of my advanced stage 3 diagnosis my only hope of survival is a successful bone marrow transplant. This cancer has blind sided me. I am consulting with a renowned specialist in this type of cancer at Saint Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan later this week. Hopefully the Chemotherapy that I've been enduring the past two weeks and will continue to receive for the next two or more months will put the cancer in remission and give me the opportunity to receive the bone marrow transplant that I desperately need.. My pregnant wife and three young children depend on the success of this procedure.

Before this, I was a completely healthy 37 year old Detective with no prior medical conditions. I implore all of you to consult your own physicians and get this necessary testing. We are not invincible. I am truly touched by the outpour of support and compassion from the New York City Police Department, the Detective Endowment Association, all my fellow members of Law enforcement throughout the country and my friends and family.

My mission is simple, I want to be sure you all understand that the standard tests that are offered will not identify this life threatening condition. Doctors have told me that the most effective way to detect Multiple Myeloma is to measure protein levels in a simple urine analysis unfortunately these levels are not being measured in the standard tests.

Keep me in your prayers and God bless you. 🍀

Detective Ron Richards
New York City Police Department
Mossep11@aol.com